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SUBJECT: EXBS STRATEGY FOR OMAN

Classified By: Ambassador Richard L. Baltimore III.

Reason: 1.4(b).

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) EXBS Advisor recently met with Omani officials, Embassy staff and representatives of the Department of Energy's MEGAPORTS Initiative to discuss the current state of Export Controls and Related Border Security in Oman. Oman, a recent addition to both the Container Security Initiative (CSI) and the MEGAPORTS Initiative, has shown great willingness to work with USG organizations to better protect its ports and borders. Based on meetings with concerned Omani officials, following is the proposed EXBS strategy for Oman. END SUMMARY.

II. MEETINGS SUMMARIES

2. (U) Between September 25 and October 4, EXBS Advisor met with principal US Embassy staff to discuss the state of EXBS in Oman. The salient points of those meetings were as follows:

A. (SBU) The ROP-Coast Guard has done a good job executing traditional missions of maritime interdiction and coastal security. Better cooperation between the ROP-Coast Guard and the Royal Oman Navy with respect to the use and application of coastal radar would allow the Coast Guard to use its limited assets more effectively in countering smuggling and the potential threat of illicit proliferation activities.

B. (SBU) A National Command Center for Border Security under the operational control of the Royal Oman Police would allow Oman to coordinate its assets in securing its borders. Specialized elements of the Omani armed forces are capable of imposing localized control in response to an identified proliferation incident. Because the joint concept of operations is new to Oman, scenario-driven exercises would likely be required to ensure smooth operational performance of a National Command Center for Border Security.

C. (C) Omani ability to operate effectively at night is limited, but could be enhanced with appropriate training and equipment.

D. (SBU) A culture and tradition of illicit trade in the region hampers the establishment of effective and modern export controls, especially in the coastal areas of the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman, and along the land border with the Republic of Yemen.

3. (U) On September 25-26, EXBS Advisor toured the Port of Salalah and met with officials of the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications (MOTC), Royal Oman Police (ROP), and Salalah Port Services Company (SPS), as well as officials from the US Embassy and representatives of the MEGAPORTS Initiative. The salient points of those meetings were as follows:

A. (U) The Sultanate of Oman and Salalah port officials are committed to cooperating with the Container Security Initiative, the MEGAPORTS Initiative and other EXBS-related programs.

B. (U) The official signing of the Container Security Initiative (CSI) and MEGAPORTS agreement between Oman and the U.S. will occur later this fall. CSI implementation at Salalah will ensure all targeted containers are scanned with program equipment.

C. (U) The Department of Energy's MEGAPORTS team will survey the Port of Salalah the first week of December 2005. Following this survey, the MEGAPORTS team will recommend points of equipment installation and address any impact on port operations. When all stakeholders agree upon equipment location, MEGAPORTS will begin physical installation and

training of Omani personnel. Training will occur in the U.S. and Oman. Taking into consideration the unique design and operational procedures of Salalah, MEGAPORTS will install its equipment to facilitate scanning of the greatest percentage of transshipped cargo possible while minimizing the operational impact of such scanning. A working group composed of representatives of MOTC, ROP-Customs and SPS will be identified and tasked by the Omani government to interface with MEGAPORTS representatives.

1D. (U) According to SPS, 99 percent of all cargo moving in and through Salalah is transshipped. The average dwell-time for cargo is 4.3 days and for empty containers it is 6 to 7 days. One quarter of all cargo moving through Salalah has a quick turn around of one day or less.

14. (U) On September 27, EXBS Advisor toured Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat and met with officials of the MOTC, ROP-Customs, and Port Services Corporation - Port Sultan Qaboos (PSC), as well as officials from the US Embassy and representatives of the MEGAPORTS Initiative. The salient points of the meetings were as follows:

1A. (U) The Sultanate of Oman and Muscat port officials are committed to cooperating with the Container Security Initiative, the MEGAPORTS Initiative and other EXBS related programs.

1B. (U) The official signing of the Container Security Initiative (CSI) and MEGAPORTS agreement between Oman and the U.S. will occur later this fall. CSI implementation at Port Sultan Qaboos will ensure all targeted containers are scanned with program equipment.

1C. (U) MEGAPORTS Initiative will send a site survey team to Port Sultan Qaboos the first week of December to complete a site survey. Implementation of MEGAPORTS at Port Sultan Qaboos will be simultaneous with implementation at the port of Salalah.

1D. (U) According to PSC, Port Sultan Qaboos moves approximately 284,000 containers annually, and fifty to sixty thousands of these containers are transshipments. Cargo manifests are electronically filed with Omani Customs by the shipper or freight forwarder. New entry gates to the port are under construction which will facilitate near 100 percent scanning of all container cargo while ensuring a negligible operational impact. Most shippers using the port give 48 hour notification to port authorities on manifested cargo. The exception is when feeder ships from other regional ports like Dubai, U.A.E., sail and enter the port in under 48-hours. Most cargo moving into and through the port originates in Japanese, Chinese and other Asian ports.

15. (U) On October 1-2, EXBS Advisor toured the Sohar Industrial Port and the border crossings at Wadi Al-Jizi and Al-Wajahjah, and met with Jamal Tawfiq Aziz, Deputy CEO, Sohar Industrial Port Company (SIPC); Captain Murad A. al-Ma'amari, Harbor Master, SIPC; Major Khalid al-Yahyai and other officers and inspectors of the ROP-Customs assigned to the region. The salient points of those meetings were as follows:

1A. (U) The Sultanate of Oman and Sohar port officials are committed to cooperating with the Container Security Initiative, the MEGAPORTS Initiative and other EXBS-related programs.

1B. (U) A Declaration of Principles is scheduled to be signed in November 2005 and will cover the Container Security Initiative and Megaports activities proposed for Oman. Implementation is currently being planned at the Port of Salalah and Port Sultan Qaboos.

1C. (U) The government of Oman and SIPC have a detailed master plan to develop the port of Sohar into a world class industrial port modeled after Rotterdam. The managing partner for the port has just been announced as Hutchison, a Port Holding based in Hong Kong. Development of the port is coordinated with the Omani move away from an oil-centric economy. Port facilities and industrial infrastructure will capitalize on emerging natural gas technology rather than oil-based designs. Sohar will center on petro-chemical industries and refineries, bulk and liquid shipping, a container terminal, medium industries such as an aluminum smelter, related trucking and shipping infrastructure and an extensive special economic/free trade zone.

1D. (U) Current milestones of Sohar development on or ahead of schedule include: completion of liquid jetties (April 2006); general cargo berthing area expansion from 300 to 750 meters (Jan 2006); dredging harbor channel to a depth of 16.5 meters and using fill to create foundation for new terminal and berth capacity expansion (2007-2009) and establishment of the special economic/free trade zone (2007-2010.)

1E. (SBU) Border crossings at Wadi Al-Jizi and Al-Wajahjah are newly opened facilities manned 24/7 by Immigration and ROP-Customs personnel. These two portals see most of the vehicular and commercial truck traffic moving between the U.A.E. and Oman. Typical contraband confiscated by ROP-Customs at these locations includes fireworks, alcohol, cigarettes, pornography and mobile telephones. Some seizures of illicit drugs, ammunition and small arms have occurred, but are rare. Alternate routes of ingress and regress used by smugglers are known and monitored as availability of personnel and equipment allow. As in other areas of the region, smuggling activities are frequently a family-centered activity. Smugglers are not generally armed. Typical daily averages at Al-Wajahjah include 621 commercial trucks and 1500 automobiles. The majority of trucks travel into Oman during the night. ROP-Customs manning at these portals is comparable with U.S. Customs and Border Protection norms at portals of similar size and activity. Searches of cargo appeared to be conducted visually and by hand without the aid of any instrumentation. Although not seen by EXBS Advisor, ROP-Customs claimed to have detection dogs available for each shift.

III. EXBS COUNTRY STRATEGY

16. (U) Following meetings, tours and extensive discussions with Omani and U.S officials, Advisor recommends the following strategy for EXBS in Oman:

1A. (U) Develop or adapt current training to capitalize on the Omani strategic plan to create three ports focused on distinct niches; Salalah (Transshipment), Qaboos (Export/Import) and Sohar (Industrial).

1B. (U) In concert with the return of the MEGAPORTS site survey team in December 2005 (or following the signing of the expected MOU) facilitate an assessment of Omani border crossing stations and vehicular arteries by the Department of Energy Second Line of Defense/CORE program.

1C. (U) Provide WMD/WME basic-level awareness training to ROP-Customs and other Omani officials located in the greater geographic regions of Salalah (southern Oman) and Sohar (northern Oman) and WMD/WME Advanced-level awareness training to ROP-Customs and other Omani officials located in capital region of Muscat.

1D. (U) Engage US Customs and Border Protection to develop and present professional to professional training on Risk Management, Detection, Search and Seizure and Tactics/M.O. of Smugglers. Classroom training should be augmented by instructors observing ROP-Customs personnel implementing skills and tactics at Omani locations. EXBS Advisor strongly recommends a seasoned CBP Inspector visit Oman, observe current customs procedures and then act as resource to CBP as it adapts and personalizes existing training for Oman. Approved training should be scheduled for iterations in Sohar, Muscat and Salalah.

1E. (U) Use Sohar Port development to drive necessary legal reforms and creation of an Omani Export Controls System, establish the need and structure of an Omani National Control List, encourage Omani adherence or membership in relevant control regimes and create a viable licensing infrastructure in Oman. As the various phases of the Sohar development come on-line, Omani officials will quite naturally be better prepared to recognize and respond to the need for an integrated control list and licensing and export controls system. Presentation of EXBS training in legal and licensing workshops should be keyed to the phased development of Sohar.

1F. (U) Consider funding a study of how Oman can effectively design a Joint National Command Center for Border Security under the operational control of the Royal Oman Police. Among other issues, EXBS Advisor recommends the study address or identify the following: how to integrate forces and assets in a joint operational environment; options for structure and composition of a Quick Reaction Force tasked to respond to proliferation incidents; and options for leveraging human operations with relevant technological systems, i.e., deployment of non-lethal remote piloted surveillance vehicles and integrated multi-sensor arrays at select border and maritime locations.

17. (U) Any questions or comments can be directed to Joseph C. Irvine, EXBS Advisor to Jordan & the Middle East, Telephone: (962 6) 590-6550/6558, Fax: (962 6) 592-7653, Email: IrvineJC@state.gov
BALTIMORE